

Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

Gambling-Free Policy Guidelines

In agreement with the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) Terms and Conditions and Standards of Care, all BSAS-funded substance abuse programs are expected to have written policies that ensure a healthy environment for all clients with addictions and mental health disorders, including those who have experienced a problem with their gambling behavior. Therefore, every BSAS-funded program must adopt a written gambling-free policy that is in agreement with the following guidelines.

To establish policies regarding gambling behaviors, it is important that each agency use the same operational definition of gambling. The definition that the Mass. Council on Compulsive Gambling has chosen is, "...risking something of value on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning is less than certain" (Korn and Shaffer, 1999). Common forms of gambling to consider are:

- lottery games (scratch tickets, Keno, numbers games)
- pari-mutuel (horse and dog races, jai lai)
- casinos (table games and slot machines)
- sports betting (office or family pools and/or with a bookie)
- bingo or beano
- raffles and fundraising tickets
- internet gambling of any type
- day trading
- animal fights
- betting on individual skills
- electronic gaming devices
- any card, video, board, or other games for money

BSAS program gambling-free policies must at least include the following:

- **Illegal wagering:** Illegal wagering, just as any other illegal activities, cannot take place on the premises. Illegal wagering is defined as any wagering, betting or gambling that does not meet the parameters of the law. Illegal wagering can include betting with a bookie, betting in office pools with a cut of all money wagered given to the organizer, and illegal machines.
- **Staff conduct:**
 - Agency-organized trips with clients are not permitted to gambling establishments. Trips that are not permitted may include trips to casinos, bingo, and horse/dog track.
 - Staff gambling or discussion of gambling in front of clients (scratch tickets in the hallway, talking about their latest trip to the casino) is not permitted.
 - Betting between clients and staff members is not permitted.
- **Gambling on premises:** Lottery machines or gambling opportunities on the premises are not permitted. Agencies are not required to monitor raffles within 12-step meetings held on the premises.

Each Gambling-Free Policy should also include other program-specific gambling policies that have already been adopted or that the program chooses to adopt.